

*Folk story Plays
for Children*

*By
Margaret Lynch Conger*



REFERENCE

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Folk story plays for children.

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FOLK STORY PLAYS
FOR
CHILDREN

FOLK STORY PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

Written by

MARGARET LYNCH CONGER

Illustrated by

FLORENCE IVINS

NEW YORK

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1920

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DEDICATION

To Barbara, Peter and Margot whose pleasure has made the work delightful, these plays are affectionately dedicated.

PREFACE

With the growth of interest in children the power of their dramatic instinct and its possible value in education has come to be recognized. But there is at present very little material arranged in dramatic form to meet the demand for plays for children. The plays in this volume were drawn from the folklore of several countries with the idea that in subject matter and sentiment they have already proved satisfactory, while in language they have been made as nearly as possible like the language of Children. They have been worked out with property lists and stage directions so that the manager, who is usually an already busy teacher or mother, will find the work as complete as possible. The materials called for are simple and within the reach of nearly all. Paints, paper and a few yards of the cheapest cloth would be sufficient. The color is by far the most important factor in the effect. If no one is skilful enough to make the drop-scenes some plain curtains hung in the background will be very satisfactory. The plays could be easily managed by the children themselves with the minimum of supervision and it is hoped that they will lead the way for the children to arrange their own plays from the stories they like best.

CONTENTS

"The Poor Old Dog"

This play is based on a Russian story of a dog who, being considered useless in his old age, is turned out of his home to die in the woods, but by following the friendly advice of a wolf he proves his value and is taken back with honor.

"Fairy Old Boy and the Tiger"

A Chinese story of a fierce and evil tiger who terrorized a countryside. His evil nature was gradually conquered by the advice of a good fairy until he became a help instead of a trouble and he finally loses the shape of a tiger and is transformed into a handsome young man, the God of the Western Heaven.

"The Good Housewife and Her Labors"

Irish folk lore has contributed a merry tale about a thrifty housewife who never wasted a minute. She was foolish enough to wish aloud that she had someone to help her in her work and that gave the wee folks their chance. They swarmed in, took possession of the house, did so much work and made so much noise that she was nearly distracted and managed to get rid of them by a clever trick just in the nick of time to arouse her husband from the enchanted sleep into which he was falling.

"The Magic Rose"

A tale from Brittany of a magic rose, a brave young man, an enchanted princess, three nights of watching and a bottle of magic water which frees the princess from the ugly shape of a beast.



THE POOR OLD DOG

A Russian folk story in three scenes for children under twelve. It has four characters and takes about twenty minutes to act.





Characters

Peter, a peasant.

Anna, Peter's wife.

Tawny, a dog.

A Wolf.

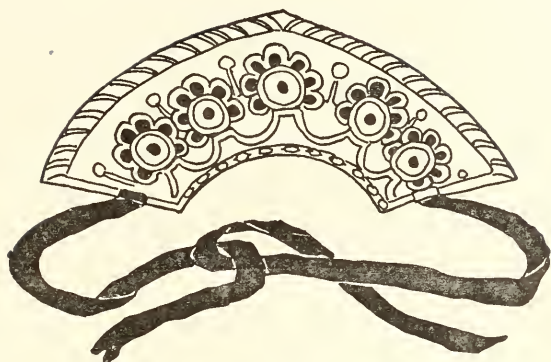
Scenes

Scene I—A clearing in the forest with a peasant's hut.

Scene II—A path through the forest.

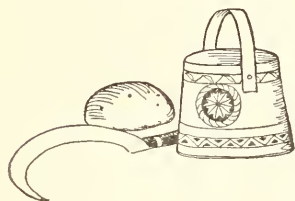
Scene III—A wheat field on the edge of the forest.

Properties



Drop scenes for back of stage, can be drawn on large sheets of wrapping paper and colored with crayons.

A rock can be made by draping a piece of grey or brown cloth over a small table.



A gay lunch basket made of a wooden salt box or butter firkin painted; the design can be painted directly on the basket or made of cloth or paper and glued on.

A loaf of bread.

A sickle made of pasteboard.

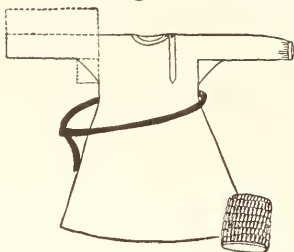
A wolf's head made of stout pasteboard with straps for the arm and hand so that the child can hold it to screen his own head. He can either wear his own clothes or some simple, kimona-like garment, covering him from neck to ankles, made of blue.



Properties (continued)



A dog's head made in the same way as the wolf's head. The covering garment should be white with red polka dots.

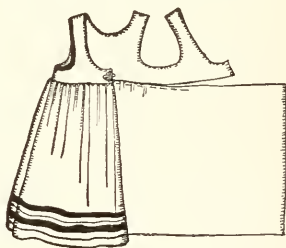


A Russian blouse for the peasant.

Russian boots can be imitated by drawing a heavy pair of stockings over the child's own shoes and stockings.

A hat shaped like a cylinder with loops of dark wool to suggest fur. The foundation lining can be cardboard or several thicknesses of newspaper.

A sleeveless coat for the peasant's wife.

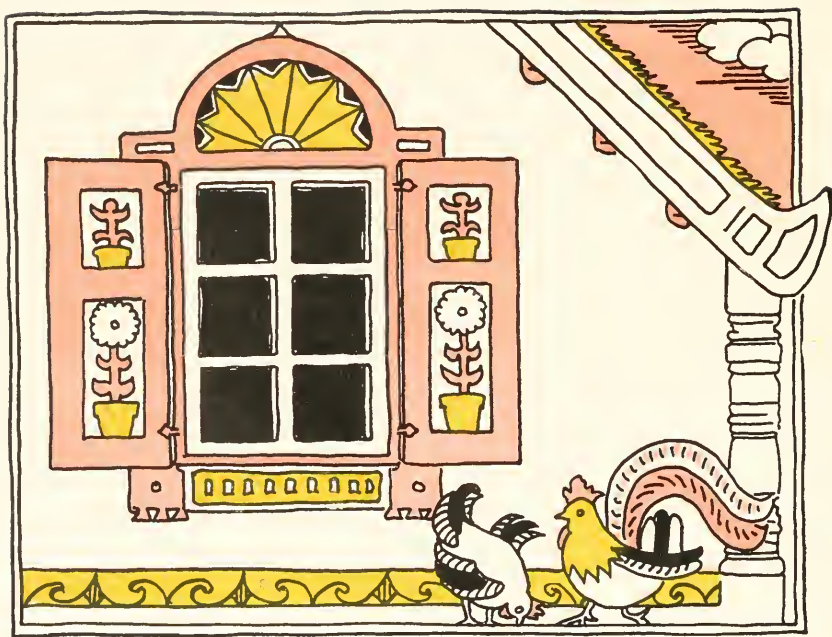


A head dress for the peasant's wife.

An apron for the peasant's wife.



A doll wrapped in a gay shawl for the baby.



Scene—A clearing in the forest with a peasant's hut in the corner on the left. The hut could show a window with a geranium in a pot and a door or just a door. If possible have a door that will open. A woman, Anna, with a baby in her arms is scolding the old dog, Tareny.

ACT ONE

A Clearing in the Forest With a Peasant's Hut

Anna. You bad dog! You bad, bad dog! That pedlar might have murdered me and stolen my precious, precious baby! And you never said a word, not a single word!! What good are you? Eating your head off and not doing a single thing! Just lying in the sun all day. You wait till my man comes home. I'll tell him! The way you look after us when he's away! Shame on you! Ah, my precious is crying now. Is it frightened? Poor little tootsie, ootsie, ickleums! The bad man won't hurt him; no, he won't!

Tawny (Looks very much ashamed, crouches down, licks the woman's foot and thumps his tail a little).

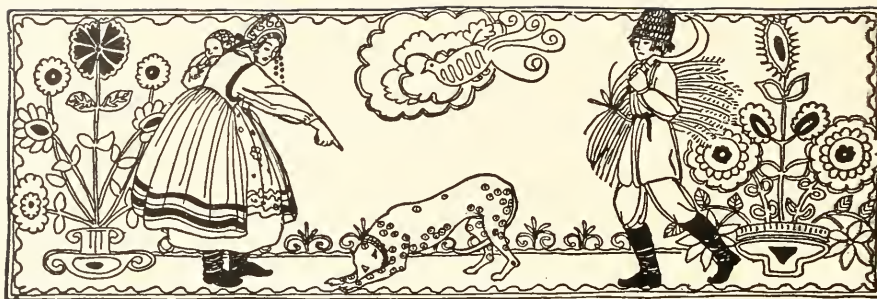
Peter (Comes in from the left with the sickle over his shoulder). What's the matter, wife?

Anna. This old dog! He's too lazy to do his work any more! He let that good-for-nothing pedlar fellow come up close to the house. He might have murdered me! Pretending to sell tin pots!

Peter. Well, that's a little too much! He's no good! He's getting too old to do his work any more! I'm tired of feeding him! Get out of this! Be off! You can't live here any more!

Tawny (Sits up on his hind legs, holds out his fore-paws begging, crosses his fore-paws, gives a little, tiny, beseeching whine).

Peter. No, I mean it. Be off with you! Get out!



Tawny (Looks very pathetic, puts his head more on one side, waves a paw vaguely about as much as to say, "Where shall I go?").

Peter. Go anywhere. You can live in the woods. Make friends with the wolves. You can die if you like. I'm tired of you! My wife might have been murdered!

Tawny (Looks beseechingly at Anna).

Anna. Give him another chance. That pedlar wouldn't have hurt me. It was old Nicholas that I've known all my life and I could do him up with one hand. He's harmless enough.

Peter. The dog's no good! I've said he was to go and he goes! Don't you let me see you again! (Peter goes into the hut and bangs the door. Anna throws Tawny a piece of bread and he slinks off. Anna looks very sorry to see him go and then shakes her baby and scolds him).

Anna. You naughty boy! Crying and screaming over nothing! And now poor Tawny's gone!

ACT TWO

A Path Through the Forest

(Tawny comes through the woods with a loaf of bread in his mouth. He sits down very sorrowfully with his head between his paws. He gives a great big sigh. The wolf comes trotting through the woods, looking about him to see whatever is to be seen and he finds Tawny lying by the path. He stops to look at him. Then after a moment he creeps up with his head forward to sniff at him. The dog gives another great sigh and the wolf springs back and runs behind a tree or rock. Tawny lies still. The wolf peeks around the corner of the rock to look at him. The dog lies still. The wolf comes nearer. The dog gives a monstrous sigh. The wolf springs back to the tree again, but does not hide behind it this time. They are both quiet for a moment. Then Tawny speaks to himself. He has not seen the wolf at all.)

Tawny. No good! Too old! I can die if I like or make friends with the wolves! They forget the time that I saved their lives when the house was on fire. And once he was lost in the snow and I found him. And now I can die! ! (He sighs.)

Wolf. Or be friends with the wolves (in a cheerful voice). You forget that. Wolves make good friends. Try me.

Tawny (Turning his head just the least little bit to look at the wolf). I'm too old to hunt.

Wolf. Haven't you any teeth left?



Tawny (He says nothing, but opens his mouth very slowly and forlornly and the wolf looks in and examines both sides of his mouth very thoroughly)

Wolf. Only one at the back. That isn't much good, is it?

Tawny. Well, now that you know, why don't you bite me?

Wolf. Let me think a minute. (He walks up and down switching his tail and thinking very hard. Tawny looks at him a moment and then sinks his head on his paws with a sigh).

Wolf (Suddenly stopping and looking as if he had a bright idea). Has this peasant got a wife and baby?

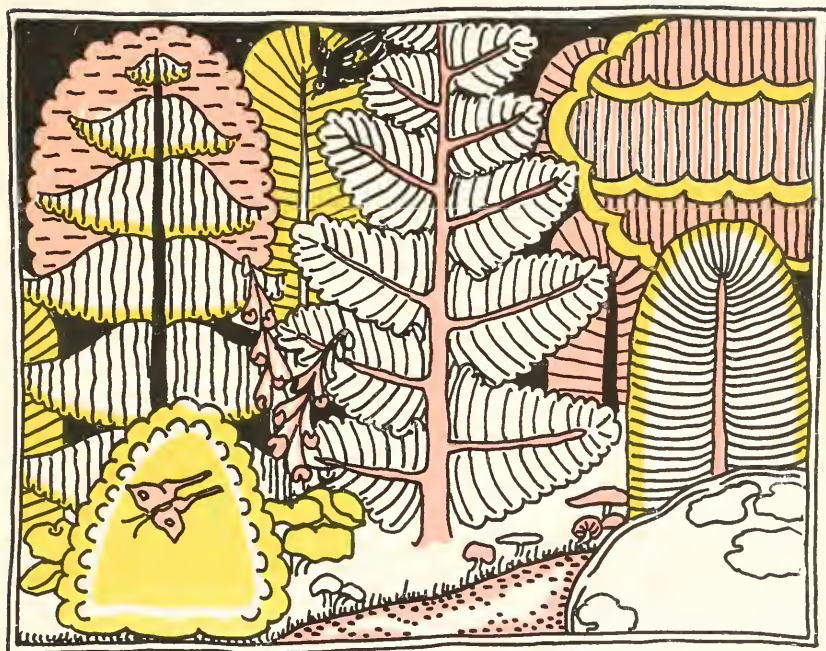
Tawny. Yes, he has.

Wolf. Good! You must rescue the baby!

Tawny. The baby's all right. His wife takes good care of it.

Wolf. A wolf might steal it when she wasn't looking.

Tawny (Starting up and growling). Now, see here! You may think I'm too old to be any good in the



Scene—In the forest. A path on the left leading to an opening between the trees.

woods, but just you let me see you touch that baby! You'll be mighty sorry, I can tell you! Just you try it and see! (Growls!)

Wolf. (Laughing). That's it! That's the idea! Just listen to my plan. I'll run away with the baby when the woman isn't looking and when she sees me then you'll jump up and chase me and rescue the baby, see?

Tawny (Slowly beginning to understand). And then they'll take me back. But, see here! Don't you dare hurt that baby!

Wolf. Come on, old pal! We'll have to watch them and see when we have a chance. (They trot off together into the woods.)

CURTAIN



ACT III

A Wheat Field on the Edge of the Forest

(First the dog and the wolf come trotting by from right to left looking everywhere.)

Wolf. She isn't in this part of the field.

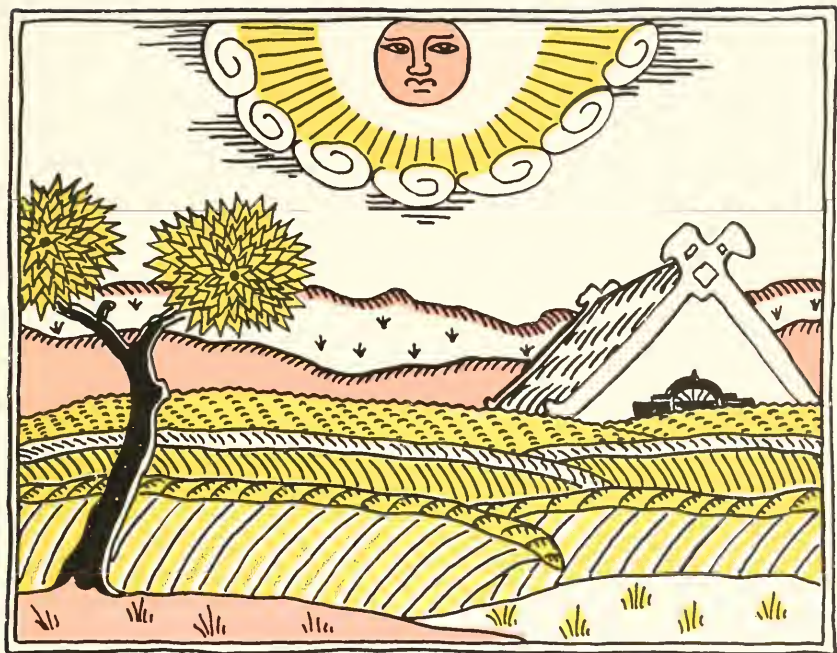
(Next comes Peter with his sickle over his shoulder and walks by from right to left. Then come the dog and wolf again and go out same direction as before. Then comes Anna with her baby and a basket of lunch, same direction. The wolf and dog come in again and catch sight of her. Anna stops and looks about her and the dog and wolf hide behind a rock.)

Anna. Now, lovey, here is a beautiful, shady rock, for you and mother will leave you here. (She takes off her shawl and lays the baby down on it beside the rock. She tucks the shawl about him and quiets him, puts the lunch basket near and leaves him. As she walks away she speaks.)

Anna. I do wish Tawny were here to take care of him.

(The wolf waits a moment till she is out of sight and then comes up to the baby and noses him. The baby begins to cry. The wolf snatches him up and runs out, the baby crying. Anna runs in from the left and finds the shawl empty. She is frantic! She wrings her hands.)

Anna. O, my baby, my baby! A wolf has eaten him! Peter! Peter! Peter! A wolf has stolen the baby!



*Scene—The wheat fields. The hut showing in the distance on the left.
Tree on the right.*



(She runs out to the right and Peter runs in left with his sickle over his shoulder and runs after her shouting.)

Peter. Wolf! Wolf!

(The wolf runs through from the left to the right with the baby in his mouth. A long way behind are Peter and Anna, chasing him. The next time the wolf runs through, Tawny springs out from behind the rock with a growl and flies at the wolf. He barks and barks and snaps at the wolf. When Peter and Anna come running in again the wolf drops the baby and runs away. Tawny stands over the baby and wags his tail.)

Peter. It's Tawny, our old Tawny that we turned out into the woods.

Anna (Snatching up her baby and cuddling him). O, my precious, precious baby! Did the wolf eat him all up? Nasty, bad wolf! But Tawny saved him! Tawny will keep him safe and never let anything happen to him. Good old Tawny! The best dog that ever was!

Peter (Petting Tawny). Good old dog! He shall have a good piece of meat for his supper. To think we wanted to turn him out and said he was no good!

(They start off for home to the right, forgetting their basket, and when they are out of sight the wolf comes in from the left and looks after them and laughs and laughs and laughs. Then his eyes fall on the lunch basket. He sniffs at it, frisks about, picks it up in his mouth and trots off very happy.)

CURTAIN



“FAIRY OLD BOY AND THE TIGER”

A Chinese folk story in two acts for children. It has seven characters besides a flock of sheep and takes about twenty-five minutes to act.

Characters

An Old Shepherd.

Lee, a young man assisting the shepherd.

Fairy Old Boy, a magician.

Two little boys.

Shanwang, the tiger.

A kid.

Sheep and goats.

Scenes

Scene I—A mountain road in China. Mountains in the background; a road running across the stage in the foreground; a large rock in the background to the left; a smaller rock near the road to the right.

Scene II—The same.

Properties

A drop scene with mountains.

A high rock made by draping a grey or brown cloth over a table and stool. It must be firm enough to stand on.

A smaller rock made by draping a grey or brown cloth over a low table.

Staves for the shepherds.

A leather bottle.

An animal for the tiger to carry in his mouth. (A fur neck-piece, preferably fox fur on account of the color.)

A head for the tiger. (Stout paper bag painted as per illustration.)

A chariot. (Two wheels with pole for magician to straddle. A spirited steed can be left to the imagination of the child.)

Tunic, hat and mantle for Old Shepherd.

Tunic, hat and mantle for Lee.

Tunics, hats and mantles for two little boys.

Covering for the tiger made of striped yellow and black; if possible awning—otherwise ordinary black and white—yellow chalk on the white does the rest.

Clothes for tiger when he takes the covering off.

Hat, beard, mantle for Fairy Old Boy when disguised.

Magician's dress for Fairy Old Boy.

Clothes for kid. (White cap, black nose, white sweater.)

Clothes for the sheep and lambs. (Round caps of tan material, black ears, black lines around eyes, nose, etc., brown sweaters.)

Clothes for goats, similar to the sheep, a more pointed cap and horns.





ACT ONE

Two shepherds are camping with their sheep and goats between the rocks.

Old Shepherd. Climb the rock, Lee, and look about to see if we are safe.

Lee (Climbs the high rock and looks in every direction and reports). There is nothing to be seen in the moonlight except an old man coming up the road.

Old Shepherd. Who is he?

Lee. I cannot see his face, but he walks like a stranger.

Old Shepherd. I wish that we had time to get home.

Lee. This is where my father said he used to camp many a time with his sheep.

Old Shepherd. When I was a young man we always camped here in the summer. Then the next day we took our sheep up to the fields near the top of these mountains. The grass is good up there. We lived there all summer while the sheep grew fat. But that was before Shanwang;



Scene—A mountain road in China—mountains in the background—a road running across the stage in the foreground—a large rock at the back, to the left—a smaller rock near the road, to the right.

the tiger, came. In those days we were not afraid of anything. Every week the boys from the village used to climb up to our meadows to bring us food and we drank goat's milk and ate berries. It was a good life, but it would not be safe now.

Lee. Why doesn't somebody shoot Shanwang?

Old Shepherd. He has been shot many times, but he turns the arrows by his magic and then he jumps on the hunter and kills him. He is a magic tiger.

Lee. Why does not the priest say prayers then?

Old Shepherd. The whole village has prayed in the temple and made sacrifices and the priest has prayed over the hunters, but it is of no use. He is a very powerful, magic tiger and the only one who could help us is Fairy Old Boy and he is far away in the Eastern Heaven. I think I hear a noise back there. Climb up on the rocks, Lee, and see if we are safe.

Lee (Climbs the rock and reports). I see nothing but the stranger. He is about a mile away. (Lee looks down the road pointing left and says) There, I think you can see him now as he turns the bend in the road. He is a stranger, isn't he?

(The Old Shepherd rises and goes to look down the road and while they are both looking to the left Shanwang, the tiger, slips around the rocks at the right and springs at the sheep. The sheep bleat, the tiger growls and the shepherds attack the tiger with their staves. He retreats, growling, behind the rocks and the shepherds stand guard. While they are watching the place where the tiger disappeared, the tiger comes from behind the rocks at the left, snatches up a lamb and runs off.

The lamb is heard bleating in the distance. There is considerable confusion.)



Old Shepherd. Why did you stand where I was, Lee? Why didn't you go to the other side?

Lee. But he couldn't get through at the back of the rocks. The hill is so steep that nothing can grow on it. There is no foothold.

Old Shepherd. He must have bewitched you. He is a magic tiger.

Lee. That must have been the way. I could not move my arm when I tried to strike him with my crook.

Old Shepherd (Looks over the flock of sheep that are left). It was one of our best lambs.

(The figure of a very old, very tired man comes up the road leaning on a staff. He pauses to rest every now and then. He is dressed like a pilgrim. The shepherds see him and go to meet him.)

Old Shepherd. Come and rest (by our fire), most honorable pilgrim. Spread your coat on the ground, Lee, and bring some goat's milk.

(Lee spreads his coat and they both help the old man to sit and try to make him comfortable. The old man seems very feeble. Lee brings some goat's milk in a leather bottle. The old man drinks it and seems to revive.)

Stranger. You have shown courtesy to old age and hospitality to a stranger. It may be that I, old and feeble as I look, may help you in my turn. The body of old age needs help, but the mind gives help and I am very old and have travelled.

Old Shepherd. Perhaps you could tell us where Fairy Old Boy is to be found. He could help us in our trouble, but he no longer lives here.

Stranger. I saw Fairy Old Boy last week, but he was a long way from here. What do you want of him?

Old Shepherd. We need his advice. He could cast a spell for us over Shanwang. We are all afraid of a very powerful, magic tiger who lives around here. (The Old Shepherd glances all about him over his shoulder.) He

kills our cows and horses and lately he has carried off children. Only this evening while you were coming up the road, he sprang from behind these rocks. There is no hiding place there, not even a tiger could climb the cliff behind us. But he sprang around first from one side and then from the other. When we tried to drive him away with our staves he threw a spell on us so that we could move neither hand nor foot.

Stranger. Where did he come from?

(The Old Shepherd and Lee turn around to point out the place. While they are saying the next few sentences they have their backs to the stranger, who slips off his cloak and is dressed like a magician.)



Old Shepherd. We were looking over there to see you come up the road, and I was standing here, and Lee was over there and then we heard a terrible growling and a lamb bleated all at the same time and——

Lee (Is so excited that he interrupts). And I turned around and when

I saw it was he, I lifted my stick and—— (He breaks off as he sees the magician) **Fairy Old Boy!**

Old Shepherd (Turns around and is struck with astonishment). **Fairy Old Boy, himself!** (He exclaims and bows down in an oriental salaam. Lee kneels down, too.)

Fairy Old Boy. Yes, my children, it is I. Far away in the Eastern Heaven where I sat at my meditations and studies I felt your trouble. I cast my colored sands on the

table and drew a picture of the village and I saw you all in the temple praying for protection from the tiger. So I have come to help you. I will cast a spell over the tiger, but you must do exactly as I say.

Old Shepherd. Command us, Fairy Old Boy. All that we have is yours.

Fairy Old Boy. Give me then a young kid and order this young man to carry it and follow out my commands.

Old Shepherd. Take that kid, Lee; not that one, this is our best. Honorable Magician, this young man is your slave.

Fairy Old Boy. It is well. We will wait here for Shanwang. Lead your flock back to the village and have no fear. You will not meet the tiger.

(The Old Shepherd salaams, rises and leads his flock of sheep down the road. After he has gone Fairy Old Boy turns to Lee.)

Fairy Old Boy. Lay the kid down here in the sand. (He points to a spot in the middle of the stage in front of the tall rock.) We will rest here. (He sits down beside the rock at the right. He crosses his legs in the attitude of Buddha and meditates, smiling. At first Lee looks about him nervously. He opens his hands with a gesture.)

Lee. We have no weapon—but he is calm and smiling—he has no fear—it is a magic spell. (He looks less uneasy and crosses the stage behind the rock and sits behind and a little to the right of Fairy Old Boy.)

Fairy Old Boy (Rousing himself to explain). When he sees the goat he will not notice us.

(They wait quite a long while in silence, listening,



and at last far away sounds the cry of an animal and the growl of the tiger. It comes again, nearer. Then

nearer still and presently the tiger comes in from the left with an animal in his mouth. He catches sight of the kid and springs at it growling. Then he stops for a moment and drops the animal which he is carrying. The kid is fast asleep. The tiger begins to stalk the kid. He creeps up to it with sideways movements like a cat stalking a sparrow. The kid lies perfectly still. The tiger creeps up slowly until he is close and crouches down. The kid rolls over and wakes up. He rolls over again and sees the tiger. A pause. The kid shows no fear. He wobbles over to the tiger and rubs against his side. The tiger draws back in astonishment. The kid follows and rubs

against him and pushes him with his head. The tiger begins to play with him. They gambol about a little and then go off to the left.

Lee has been star-

ing at them from behind the rock. He follows and stares after them. He cannot believe his senses. He turns to Fairy Old Boy and says:—)

Lee. But you have let him go. You were going to kill him.

Fairy Old Boy (Smiles to himself and nods a little). This is better. Did you never hear, "There are more ways than one of catching fish"? (He rises and comes over to Lee in the centre of the stage.) You shall see my meaning. Where love has entered in the wicked passions flee away. Return to the village and tell them what you have just seen. Watch and wait.

(Fairy Old Boy rocks himself back and forth chuckling to himself.)

Fairy Old Boy. Shall I kill because I am strong? Oh, ho! Oh, ho! Did they think that Fairy Old Boy was less powerful than a tiger! Ha! ha! Ho! ho! (He points



after the tiger) Ah, ha, Shanwang, this day I have conquered thee, my old enemy. I will return next year! Oh! ho! (He walks up the road to the right and is heard laughing and chuckling to himself in the distance.)

Lee (Looks after him and rubs his eyes. Then he looks all around. He climbs the high rock and points about). Here was where I stood—I was looking over there—There he came up the road like an old man—There he sat and smiled. He feared nothing—and the tiger did no harm—perhaps he was not hungry—What did he say? “Where love has entered in the wicked passions flee away.” (He climbs down from the rock.) “There are more ways than one of catching fish.” But how shall I tell them in the village? (He starts down the road to the village, left. He turns back and points.) But he was there, I saw him. (Then he turns again and goes back to the village.)

CURTAIN



ACT TWO

Scene—The same as before. A year later.

(The two shepherds with their flock and two little boys come in from the left and camp. The sheep settle down in the centre.)

Old Shepherd. Now, boys, you can go and fill this bottle with water from the spring. It is up the hill a little way along the road. (The boys run out to the right.)

Lee. Do you think it is safe? Hadn't I better go with them?

Old Shepherd. What could harm them now?

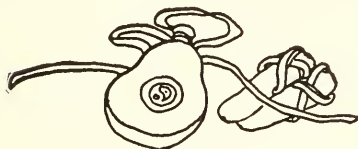
Lee. I was afraid of Shanwang.

Old Shepherd. But he no longer does any harm. It is months since he has hurt anything. We feed him now every week.

Lee. I know, but still I am afraid. He is a magic tiger and we do not know what he will do next. And they say he is changing in his appearance and he is no longer a tiger. Some say he has the legs of a man.



Old Shepherd. It may be so. It may be so. My grandfather said once—but that was an old tale—yet things like that do happen—who can tell?



Lee. Who is he, do you think?

Old Shepherd. He would not like me to say.

But he is trying to do good deeds now. Last week he saved a boy from drowning.

(The two little boys are heard screaming outside and then one of them runs in crying out)

Little Boy. A snake has caught him. Help! Help!

(The little boy catches the skirt of the old man and Lee runs out, right.)

Little Boy. He was hiding in the grass by the spring and he caught him.

(The tiger comes in from the left. He has the head of a tiger and the body of a man. He bounds across the stage and out at right after Lee. He growls fiercely and the hissing of a snake is heard. The other little boy comes running in with his tunic torn. He rushes up to the old shepherd.)

Second Boy. He saved me. The tiger saved me. He killed the snake.

Lee (Comes in with the tiger). He saved the boy. Shanwang killed the snake.

Old Shepherd (Salaams to the tiger, Shanwang). Kneel down, children. My lord, you have saved my grandson. The only one who will be left when I am gone to keep the watchlights burning at the shrine of our ancestors. How can I thank you? What can I do for you? How can I help you to win release?

Shanwang. Your thanks help me, Old Shepherd, and now my deeds are complete and my time has come.

(There is a noise of galloping horses to the left and Fairy Old Boy comes in, in his chariot. He stretches out his hand to Shanwang.)



Fairy Old Boy. Welcome, Shanwang. All your deeds are written in the scroll and the time has come. (He takes the tiger's head and pulls it off Shanwang and behold a beautiful young man. The Old Shepherd, Lee, and the two children salaam.)



Fairy Old Boy. Behold, my people, a great marvel has just happened among you. Where hate and savage passion filled your lives with fear, the sweet spirit of love has now entered. Shanwang, the tiger, bloodiest of his race, shall henceforth be a Fairy in the Western Heaven, spreading deeds of mercy wherever he appears. Know you that there is no night too black to have its daylight, no life too dark to have its love.

(Shanwang comes into the chariot beside Fairy Old Boy and they gallop off, left. As they are going, the little boy who was saved rises to his knees and stretches out his arms after them. The others are kneeling prostrate.)

CURTAIN



“THE GOOD HOUSEWIFE AND HER LABORS”

An Irish folk story in one act for children. It has three characters besides a group of fairies and takes about twenty-five minutes to act.



Characters

Patrick, a farmer.

Mary, Patrick's wife.

An Old Wiseman, who lives alone in the woods.

The Fairies, green, blue, lilac, yellow, red, etc.

Properties

Dropscene with fields and rolling hills.

Cottage with door that will open and shut. Door made of a clothes horse.

Bench outside of door.

Patrick's clothes and pipe.

Old Wiseman's clothes, hazel staff and pipe.

Mary's clothes, yoke and milk pails and bunch of wool.

Clothes for fairy girls.

Clothes for fairy boys.

Spinning wheel.

Distaff.

Kettle of water.

Pitcher for water.

Cakes for fairies.

Bran or hayseed for the fairies to throw over Patrick.

Straws and twigs or feathers (out of a feather duster) for fairies.





THE GOOD HOUSEWIFE

Scene—A roadside cottage in Ireland with fields and rolling hills behind it. Patrick, the farmer, sits on a bench outside the door lighting his pipe. The Old Wiseman comes by.

Wiseman. God save you.

Patrick. God save you kindly.

Wiseman. 'Tis the fine evening on the hills.

Patrick. It bodes rain when the sunset is red and it's fine weather I need for the barley.

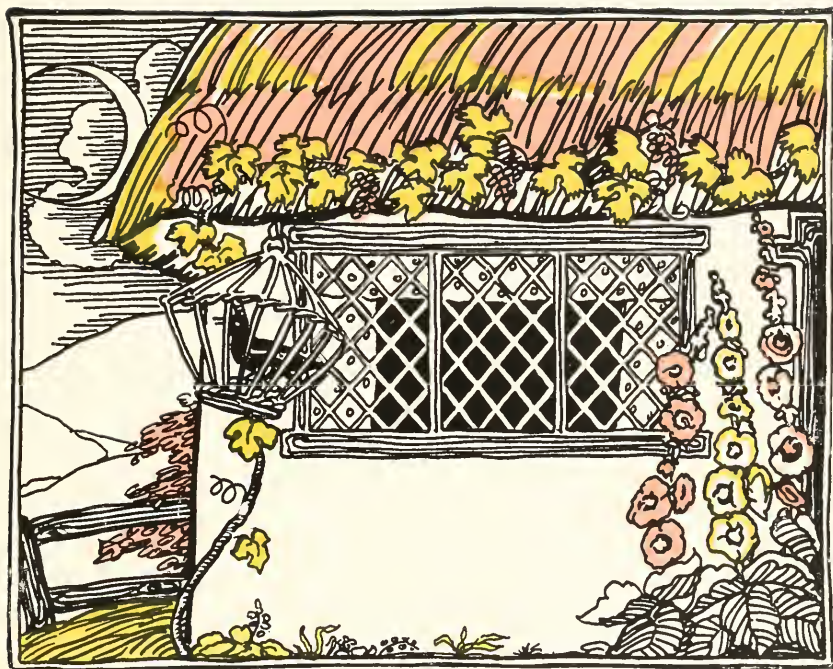
Wiseman. And a fine crop you have, farmer, a fine crop. No other in the three counties can compare.

Patrick. A fair crop, father, if I can harvest it; but a farmer's enemies be many.

Wiseman. Ah, but you have the good wife to help, the most industrious woman, works and saves half the night.

Patrick. Yes, a good housewife, a good partner: together we have added one field and then another. But we work hard, Old Wiseman, and we save, and pennies come in but slowly.

Wiseman. And what is it that you're wanting in life that more pennies can buy you? Have you not enough to eat and to warm yourself, tobacco for your pipe and peat for your fire? Only one coat can you wear at a time and



Scene—A roadside cottage in Ireland with fields and rolling hills behind it.

a brave, warm coat it is you've got. Sure you're known far and wide as the rich farmer of Bantigan. What more could money bring you but more care and trouble?

Patrick. Old age comes on, neighbor, and where will we find ourselves then?

Wiseman. Where you are now, only sad you'll be if you do not enjoy the wide heavens while you are still young.

Patrick. Enjoy the wide heavens that threaten rain while my barley is standing ripe in the ear! I enjoy the sight of my full barns and my loaded wagons. I enjoy sitting by the door after a long day's work and smelling the good wife's cooking over the fire; the bacon and the bannocks. If I lay up on the hills all day and talked to the birds would there be any supper for me to enjoy? Here comes the wife now from the milking. Stay and share a

bite with us, Old Wiseman. Your ideas are foolish, but I like to hear them. When I am arguing with you I can forget the rain tomorrow.

(Mary, Patrick's wife, enters carrying a yoke and milk pails. In her hand she is holding a bunch of wool.)

Mary. God save you, neighbor.

Wiseman. God save you kindly. Have you been shearing the sheep as well as milking?

Mary. It's wool that the sheep scrape off against the bushes. I gather it every day. By the winter it makes two bags full and that is stockings for my old man. It is by little and little that savings gather.



Wiseman. Your good man and I were starting a bit of an argument on the subject and I'll be stopping on my way home for another round. I'll maybe think of something new to say by then.

Mary. Will you not stay and have a bite with us now? I can get the supper on the table before you are more than warmed up to your talk.

Wiseman. I am travelling a bit further down the road tonight and cannot wait now. So thank you kindly, but I'll be back again this way.

Mary. If you pass the Widow Flint's cottage will you ask Kathleen to be up in the morning. Sure I'm nearly drowned in chores and the reapers are coming.

Wiseman. I'll gladly ask, but I doubt if you can get her this week with her mother sick.

Mary. I did not know. You must take her a bit of something from me. But I wish I knew where to get help. I rise before the dawn and I waste never a minute all the day through and still I cannot get the work done. O, that I could get help from somewhere!

Wiseman. Whist, woman, are ye crazed entirely? 'Tis a poor time of day to be making your heartfelt wishes. They might hear. You might get your wish and where would you be then!

Mary. I don't care who hears me. I don't care how I get my wish. I'm nearly destroyed with the work. O, that someone would come from near or far, from land or sea to help me!

(Mary goes into the cottage and the two men look at each other.)

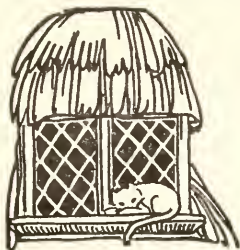
Patrick. The wife is tired.

Wiseman. I hope that the wee folks were busy on the hills. Good-bye for the hour, Farmer.

Patrick. Be sure to stop in on your way back, Old Wiseman.

(The Old Wiseman goes out and Patrick settles down on the bench by the door and starts to fill his pipe. There are sounds of moving about from inside the cottage.

Presently a little woman in a green dress with a white mutch runs up to the door and knocks on it. As she passes

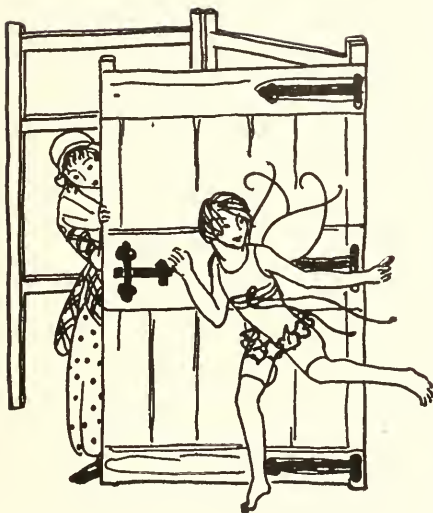


Patrick she throws a handful of fernseed over him. He does not seem to see her and nods off to sleep.)

Mary (Within).

Who is there?

Little Wee Woman. Tall Quarry, good housewife, open the door to me. As long as I have, you'll get.



(Mary opens the door and the little wee woman runs in and sits at the spinning wheel. The door is closed. A second little wee woman in lilac dress with white mutch runs up to the door and knocks. She throws fernseed at Patrick too.)

Mary (Within).

Who is there?

Second Little Wee Woman. Tall Quarry, good house-

wife, open the door to me. As long as I have, you'll get.

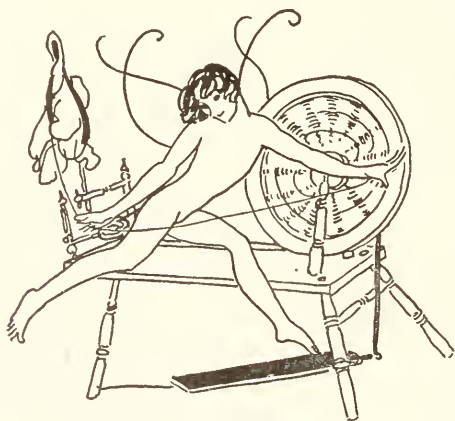
(Mary opens the door to her and she runs in and puts some wool on the distaff. The door is closed. Then a funny little mannikin in green trousers and red pirnie comes to the door and knocks. He also throws some fernseed over Patrick, who begins to mutter in his sleep.)



Mary (Within). Who is there?

Little Wee Man. Tall Quarry, good housewife, open the door to me. As long as I have, you'll get.

(When the door is opened he runs in and puts a kettle of water on the fire. The door is now left open and more and more of the wee folks run in. They spin and tease wool and weave cloth and sweep and shake rugs and make a distracting noise and confusion. Then they begin to call for something to eat. "Bake us a bannock. We are hungry." Mary goes to the cupboard and brings out some cakes, which the wee people gobble up and then call



for more. Mary runs out of the house and shuts the door behind her and tries to wake her husband.)

Mary. Patrick, Patrick, wake up and help me. The wee folks drive me crazy.

(Patrick does not stir and she shakes him and tries to rouse him, growing more and more frightened. The Old Wiseman returns.)

Wiseman. What is the matter? (He comes up to Patrick and shakes him and looks at him.) 'Tis a spell the wee folks have cast upon him. Thou foolish woman, let this be a lesson to thee never to pray for things that thou dost not want. For thy prayer may be granted and the trouble be hard to undo.

Mary. I am a fool, Old Wiseman, but let that be as it is for the time and help me now. What can I do?

Old Wiseman. Your husband must be loosed from the spell with which these little people have bound him. They must be gotten out of the house and then you must throw over him some of the water from the kettle which they have boiled. Then you must break up all the work which they have touched so that it cannot open the door to them again.

Mary. How can I get them out of the house?

Wiseman. Do you see that hill yonder? It is where they live. 'Tis called Burg Hill, the Fairy Knowe. Climb to the top and call out three times,



"Burg Hill is on fire!" Then out will run all the fairies to save their children and their homes and quick as the wind you must run home, slip in, bar the door and turn the kitchen topsy turvy. You must upset all their work or else whatever their fingers have touched will open the door and let them in, in spite of thee.

Mary. But my good man? They may do him a harm.

Wiseman. I will stay here beside him and protect him with this rod of hazel.

(Mary runs out to the right and soon her voice is heard calling shrilly.)

Mary. Burg Hill is on fire! Burg Hill is on fire! Burg Hill is on fire!

(The cottage door opens and the fairies come running out, each calling for the thing he values the most.)



Fairies.

Burg Hill is on fire! Burg Hill is on fire!

My sons and my daughters! My butter and cheese!
My meal chest and wool card! My thread and my distaff!

Burg Hill is on fire! O, try to save these!
Burg Hill is on fire! Burg Hill is on fire!

My horses and traces! My harrows and hoard!
My pigs and my pigstyes! My cow and my fetlock!

The shed where my anvil and hammer are stored!
Burg Hill is on fire! Burg Hill is on fire!

Our home will be burned where so happy we dwell!
Our life was so merry with teasing and jesting!

Our feasts and our dances forever farewell!

(When the last of the fairies has run out Mary comes rushing back and with the help of the Old Wiseman upsets the house. She pulls the wool from the distaff and takes the strap from the spinning wheel, tears the cloth and lifts the water from the fire. They work feverishly and when the faires are heard running back she slips into the house, slams the door and bars it. The Wiseman remains outside beside the farmer, who is still asleep.)

First Fairy (Knocks at the door). Good housewife, let me in.

Mary. I cannot open the door, for I am kneading the dough.

Fairy. Good spinning wheel, get up and open the door.



A Thin Voice. I cannot move for my strap is undone.

Fairy. Distaff, kind distaff, open the door for me.

A Voice. My wool is all scattered, I cannot move.

Fairy. O, water in the pot; O, wise fulling water, open the door to us.

A Gurgling Voice. The fire has gone out. I am too cold to move.

Fairies. She has tricked us. Let us torment her husband. (They try to tickle him with straws and twigs.)

Old Wiseman (Waving his hazel rod at them playfully). Be off with you. Get along out of that. You have had fun enough for one night. Let the poor man alone. Run along, the whole lot of you or I'll never leave you out a pan of cream again. You have a right to dance now with the moon coming up; and I heard that the leprechauns were planning to steal your dancing meadow this night.

The Fairies (Run out squealing). Hurry, hurry, We'll get it first!

Old Wiseman (Knocking on the door). Open, good housewife. The little plagues have gone. Now we must undo the spell.

Mary (Opens the door and brings a pitcher of the fulling water).

Wiseman (Sprinkling a little of the water over the farmer).

The while it is the fairies' hour
The fairies' tricks are full of power.

But when the hour is overpast
By wisdom we their spells uncast.

So wake you, Patrick, wake you well
Unmindful of the fairies' spell.

Patrick (Rubs his eyes and wakes up). So you are back already, Old Wiseman. You must have thought of

a good argument. I have thought of a good one, too, but it's on your side of the stream. But that doesn't matter. I can argue just as well on one side as on another. (Looks about.) What a distressful disorder in the house, good wife. Sure there is no need to work beyond the comfort in life. The evening should be for the talk. Sit down, Old Wiseman, and smoke. (The two men sit down on the bench and begin to smoke. Mary starts to pick up the things.)

CURTAIN



“THE MAGIC ROSE”

A Breton folk tale in two acts for children. It has seven characters besides children, courtiers and the crowd in the market place and takes about twenty-five minutes to act.

Characters

La Rose, a young knight errant (medieval).

A Beggar (medieval).

A Market Woman (medieval).

The Princess (medieval).

The King (medieval).

Two Herald.

Children, courtiers, the crowd in the market place.

Scenes

Scene I—A market place in a town in Brittany. There is a church in the background of the square and a well on one side.

Scene II—The same.

Properties

A drop scene showing back of market place with church. (Doors must open and close.)

A well.

Hose, a doublet and a hat for La Rose.

A rose, a sword with sword belt, a purse stuffed with grass and a bottle of water for La Rose.

Clothes and a wallet with some small coins for the beggar.

Clothes and a basket of cakes for the market woman.

A white dress, white shoes and stockings, a crown and the disguise of a beast for the princess.

A crown, sceptre, and robes for the king.

Costumes for children.

Costumes for courtiers and the crowd.



THE MAGIC ROSE

ACT I

A market place. A young man rather poorly dressed but with a fat purse and a sword, comes in. He has a rose fastened into his hat.

Market Woman. Buy some nice fresh cakes! Delicious almond cakes! Only a farthing. You look hungry, young man.

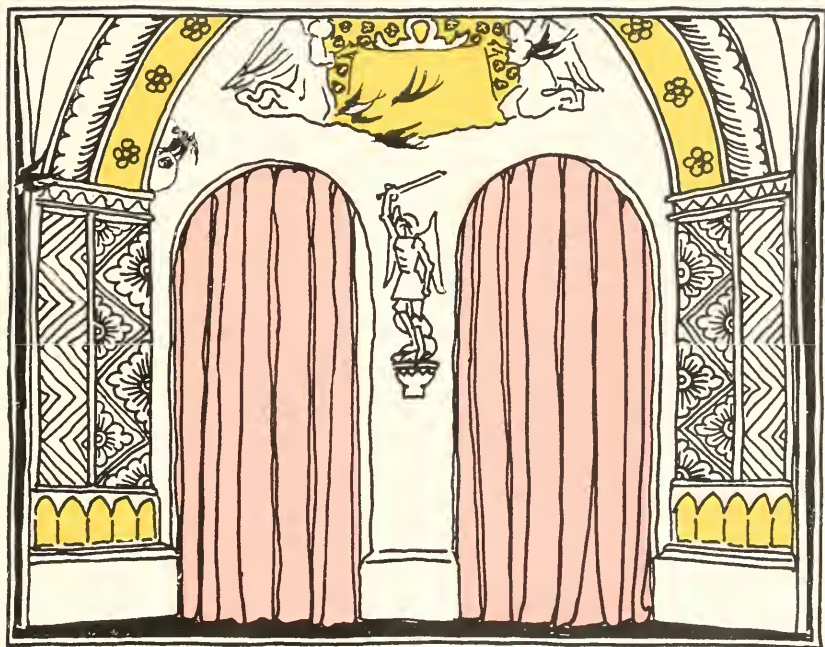
La Rose. I am hungry but I have no money. Let me work it out.



Market Woman. You'd better open your purse and pay, stingy! I have no job for you. I carry my basket myself and it gets lighter every minute. (She goes on laughing at him and begins to call.)

Market Woman. Delicious cakes! Fresh this morning!

La Rose (Looks at his purse and looks after the woman). I wish I hadn't stuffed my purse with grass. What could I sell? I will never part with my sword—but my rose— (He draws the rose out of his hat and holds it in his hand.) What luck has this! ever brought me? I might as well throw it away. (He throws it down in a temper.) But it is a talisman. (He starts to pick it up—then pauses.) It never brought me any good fortune. I was well off when I got it and now I have lost everything. (He starts to walk away—then pauses and picks up the rose.) Seven years ago today



*Scene—A market place in a town in Brittany just outside a church.
A well on one side of the market place and people moving about.*

when I tricked the water pixie and took her rose away from her.

(A group of children have been gathering about and now they point at him and begin to laugh.)

Children. See a man carrying a rose like a lady!
Ha! ha!

(They join hands and dance about him in a circle and sing.)

Children (Singing).

Seven years of bad luck,
Ever after good;
For him who steals a magic rose
From pixies in the wood.

La Rose. Funny kids! My old nurse used to sing something like that. I guess this is not the time to throw that rose away. (He places the rose back again in his hat.)

Beggar. Gimme a penny, young man, only a penny, How will such a rich young man ever miss a penny? Not a morsel have I had to eat for hours and hours. How can a rich young man like you know what it means to be hungry? Just a penny!

La Rose. I wish I had a penny in the world, but I





haven't. And I'm just as hungry as you ever were in your life. You had better give me a penny.

Beggar. He says he has no money with that nice fat purse hanging in full sight!

La Rose. Would you like to look into that "nice fat purse"? (He pats it.) Good rich grass in that purse. You give me a penny. Beggars are always rich. There's nothing hungry looking about you!

Beggar. I couldn't do that, but I'll tell you something.

La Rose. What is it?

Beggar. Do you like adventure?

La Rose. Is it very exciting and dangerous?

Beggar. Forty-nine men have been killed trying to do this.

La Rose. Did anybody ever do it?

Beggar. Not yet. It's like this. You have to stand sentry here all night.

La Rose. Pooh, that's nothing! I have a sword and even without a coat of mail I will do that.

Beggar. Wait till you hear it all. Other men have had swords. But if you live till morning the king will give you a bag of gold.

La Rose. That's too easy. I feel rich now. And I certainly am hungry. Where is that market woman with the cakes?

Beggar. Wait a minute. You're too quick. You didn't hear the rest.

La Rose. Why I've traveled all over Brittainy and I have killed twenty-eight robbers with my own hand. And when I was a prince at the head of my soldiers I carved my way through a thousand of my father's enemies and turned the tide of battle. And I have walked through haunted forests and tricked the water pixies. I'm not afraid of anything.

Beggar. This is much worse than any of those things and a great many brave men have died.

La Rose. Well, out with it. What is it? I have nothing to lose and I might earn a good square meal. I used to be the son of a king and heir to a great kingdom. I used to have a happy home and a beautiful wife. And now I have nothing! My wife is dead, I own the clothes on my back and this sword and I ask a beggar for a penny and am refused.

Beggar. Don't be in such a hurry. If you will undertake this I'll give you all you want to eat and everything you want to wear, and if you are successful you will have a beautiful princess for a wife and be called the son-in-law of the king. You can lead armies and fight giants and have a happy home and when the king dies you will reign in the kingdom.

Market Woman. Cakes! Nice fresh cakes! Delicious almond cakes! Only a farthing.

La Rose (Grabs at a cake). O, I'm starving. This man will pay you.

Beggar. What a crazy young man! Like a streak of lightning! (Gives the woman some money.) Let him



have all the cakes; perhaps he will have more sense when he is fed. He has agreed to stand sentry here tonight.

Market Woman. The poor young man! What a shame! And such a nice young man, too. If he had good clothes on he'd be real handsome!

La Rose. When I am the king's son-in-law, old mother, I'll ride through the town in velvet and buy your cakes for a gold piece. Now tell me about the danger. I haven't any patience when I am hungry and this beggar man is so slow. Now come to the point, do!

Market Woman. It is the princess, poor dear lady, such a beautiful child she was! Seven long years now, alack, alack!

Beggar. She has been enchanted, my prince, and changed into an ugly beast and it may be that you can set her free.

La Rose. Maybe! Of course I can! What do I do?

Market Woman. It has been prophesied that only the Knight of the Flower should set her free. Far and wide the king has searched for such a knight, but no one can be found.

Beggar. Well, the time is here. Seven years today since the curse fell upon her and maybe the man will come. All day long I have been looking at the strangers here.

Market Woman. Young man, have you ever heard of the Knight of the Flower?

La Rose. Do you mean La Rose?

Market Woman. I don't know what I mean. It is a prophecy. The Knight of the Flower shall set the princess free.

La Rose. I am called La Rose. What am I to do?

Beggar. You have to stand as sentry all night for



three nights, and nobody has ever lived through one night. The princess lives in that church behind you. At midnight the door opens by itself and she rushes out and kills anyone who is here. A great many men have tried to set her free, but no one has succeeded and they have all been killed. So now the people in the kingdom are afraid. I, for instance, am a brave man in some ways, but I wouldn't do it to save my life. There'd be a funeral in any case. So we ask every stranger who comes here. But a great many are afraid. You know you don't have to do it even now, young man. You are welcome to the cakes. I like you.

La Rose. Now don't annoy me with that kind of talk. I might lose my temper. I shouldn't like to hurt you after your giving me a meal.

Beggar. I hope when you get to be king you will remember to make me prime minister. I think you need sensible advice and I'm not afraid of your temper even though I am afraid of the Beast.

La Rose. I won't forget. I will make you the Duke



of Rags and Tatters, and you (turning to the Market Woman) shall be Queen of the Cookie.

Beggar. You ought to take this quite seriously, young man. It isn't so easy as you think.

Market Woman. It is time for the heralds to come. Do you know what to do, young man? They will blow their trumpets and cry: "Who will stand sentry tonight?" and then is your time. You must step forward and offer yourself. Alas! there's many a brave young man been killed already.

(Trumpets are heard. The people draw up on either side and two heralds enter.)

Heralds. Know ye, know ye, the king's will!

People. We hear.

Heralds. Know ye, know ye, the king's will! To him who shall free the princess and restore her to her father, to him shall the king give the hand of his daughter in marriage. He shall be called the king's heir and shall rule over many provinces. Know ye, know ye, the king's will.

La Rose (Steps forward out of the crowd). I will undertake this. What are the conditions?

Heralds. For three nights you must stand sentry here in this square. It is only fair to warn you that all who have tried have been killed.

Beggar. This young man has no fear.

Heralds. May good fortune attend a stout heart.

(The heralds go out blowing their trumpets and followed by the crowd. The beggar, the market woman and La Rose are left.)

Beggar. Let me warn you. When the clock strikes midnight the doors of the church will swing open and the beast will rush out. That is the dangerous moment, for you are right in her path and she is so frightfully ugly that all men shrink with fear at the sight of her. Now all who have stood in her path so far have been slain. You must try something different. Lean your sword against the well, run around it and climb in. If this works the first

night then the second night you must lean your sword against the church door and climb again out of harm's way. But the third night you will have to struggle with the princess face to face.

Market Woman. One night is enough at a time and the hour is here when all but you must leave the square. Good-night, good luck! (She goes out.)

Beggar. If I could I would stay with you, beast or no beast. Good luck. (He goes out.)

La Rose. Good-night. (Looks at church door. Unbuckles his sword and leans it against the well. Puts his hands on the top of the well and evidently measures how far he will have to jump, then turns back and leans against the well with his arms folded. Well! come on, old girl. I'm ready! Do your worst!

CURTAIN





THE MAGIC ROSE

ACT II

*Scene—The same as before on the third night just before midnight.
La Rose and the beggar.*

La Rose. I can never thank you enough. I couldn't have done it without you.

Beggar. You still have the most difficult part of the work to do. Are you sure you remember? You will have no time to think.

La Rose. I dodge the Beast around the well and rush into the church. I turn to the right in the dark eight steps, feel behind a statue standing in the corner and grab a bottle of liquid. Then I come out and tackle the Beast and break the bottle over her. How's that? Sounds all right, doesn't it? Is she really beautiful? It seems hard to believe. Would I have to marry her if I didn't want to after all?

Beggar. Our beautiful little lady! I'm not worrying about that! But **do** be careful. You **are** so rash! You don't put your mind on these things and everything has to be done in order. Things are much more apt to go wrong just at the last minute. Being brave isn't the only thing in life.

La Rose. O, cheer up, old buck! I know you're right, but you irritate me. Haven't I recited that all over a hundred times? How could I forget! There, the clock is going to strike in a minute. You must go! (He fairly pushes the beggar out and takes his place by the well. The clock strikes midnight and the church doors swing slowly open. All is dark in the church. Suddenly, with a hideous roar, a dreadful beast rushes out of the church and comes straight for the well. La Rose dodges behind the well and while the beast is worrying the sword he slips into the church. The beast misses him,

drops the sword, runs round the well and follows him into the church. There is the sound of scuffling and roaring inside and La Rose runs out holding a bottle in his hand, followed closely by the beast. He dodges once around the well and then stands to face her. As she springs at him he pulls out the cork and pours the water over her. She at once falls to the ground and lies there moaning. He stands over her, not knowing what to do. She paws at her chest and rips the skin and a white dress is seen. Then La Rose pulls off her disguise and helps the most beautiful princess in the world to her feet.)

Princess. O, my wonder-



ful Knight of the Rose. How can I ever thank you. You have rescued me from a most hideous life.

(La Rose kneels at her feet and kisses her hand. Then he takes the rose from his cap and gives it to her and she kisses it and places it in the bosom of her dress. Trumpets are heard and the sound of many feet. The beggar runs in and kneels at the princess' feet and kisses her hands.)

Beggar. The princess is saved! The princess is saved!

(The king and his court enter and the princess runs to embrace her father.)

The King. My daughter, my daughter safe! (Then he turns to La Rose.) This is the man who has banished the curse and saved the princess! (He turns to the crowd.) This is my son and the heir to my kingdom.

The Crowd. Long live the prince! Long live the princess!

(The king takes the hand of the princess and La Rose and leads them out, preceded by his heralds and followed by the crowd.)

La Rose. Wait a minute. Here is the man who has really done everything. I would never have succeeded without him. (He pulls forward the beggar.)

The King. You may make him what you please, my son, but come now, we must make ready for the marriage feast.

CURTAIN

The End



*The drawings have been
given to Barbara Joins
by F.W.J.*



